

A COMPARISON OF THE RECOGNITION OF ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING IN MALAYSIA

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**A COMPARISON OF THE RECOGNITION OF
ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING IN
MALAYSIA**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND SYMBOLS

...	Ellipsis.
ﷲ	(<i>Jalla Jalāluhu</i>) He is the exalted Majestic
ﷺ	(<i>Ṣallahhu ‘alaihi wasallam</i>) May the blessings and the peace of Allah be upon him
ed.	Edition
Ed. or Eds.	Editor(s)
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , meaning “for the sake of example”
et al.	This means “and others”
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , meaning “that is”
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia)
Jr	<i>Title (Junior)</i>
n.d.	No date
n.p.	no page numbers
NACC	National Association of Christian Counselling
NASB	New American Standard Bible
No.	Number
p. or pp.	Page(s)
para.	Paragraph
Rev. ed.	Revised edition
(sic)	so called
[Square brackets]	indicate a change or addition made for clarity
Trans.	Translator(s)
USA	United States of America
Vol.	Volume(s)

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APPENDIX G	Template of The Research Notes

ARABIC transliteration¹

Arabic Letters		Romanization	Arabic Letters	Romanization	
ا (used to support ء or <i>waṣlah</i> أ or orthographic)		not represented in Romanization	ط	ṭ	
ب		b	ظ	ẓ	
ت		t	ع	‘	
ث		th	غ	gh	
ج		j	ف	f	
ح		ḥ	ق	q	
خ		kh	ك	k	
د		d	ل	l	
ذ		dh	م	m	
ر		r	ن	n	
ز		z	هـ	h	
س		s	ء	‘/a	
ش		sh	ي	y	
ص		ṣ	ة	h/t	
ض		ḍ	ال	al	
Vowels and Diphthongs					
َ	a	آ	ā	ُ	an
ِ	i	وِ	ūw	ِ	in
ُ	u	وَو	aww	ُ	un
َا	ā	وِ	īy	َو	aw
ِي	ī	وَو	doubling the letter	ِي	ay
ُو	ū	وَو(alif maqṣūrah)	á		

¹ According to the Library of Congress (2016), ALA-LC Romanization Tables, <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/roman.html>

PERBANDINGAN PENGIKTIRAFAN KAUNSELING ISLAM DAN KAUNSELING KRISTIAN DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini merupakan sebuah penyelidikan dalam bidang pengajian perbandingan agama, yang membandingkan Islam dan Kristian, serta menjadikan kaunseling sebagai subjek perbandingan, manakala isu pengiktirafan adalah domain kajian. Kajian ini dijalankan berdasarkan beberapa masalah kajian iaitu, definisi kaunseling Islam dan kaunseling Kristian yang tidak tepat, kekurangan laporan kontemporari berkaitan kaunseling Islam dan kaunseling Kristian di Malaysia, isu-isu pengiktirafan berkaitan kaunseling Islam dan kaunseling Kristian, ketidakjelasan persamaan dan perbezaan antara kaunseling Islam dan Kristian, dan ketidakstabilan amalan kaunseling Islam berbanding kaunseling Kristian di Malaysia. Objektif kajian adalah untuk mengenengahkan dan mengintegrasikan pendapat-pendapat berkaitan konsep kaunseling berdasarkan al-Quran dan Bible, menganalisa pelaksanaan kaunseling oleh pengamal kaunseling Muslim dan Kristian di Malaysia, memeriksa dan menilai pendapat-pendapat pengamal kaunseling Muslim dan Kristian berkaitan konsep, perkembangan, dan pengiktirafan kaunseling Islam dan Kristian di Malaysia, dan membandingkan konsep, perkembangan dan pengiktirafan antara kaunseling Islam dengan kaunseling Kristian di Malaysia. Metodologi kajian yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah metodologi kajian dasar (*grounded theory*). Data dipungut melalui dua kaedah utama iaitu kajian perpustakaan dan kajian lapangan. Data kajian lapangan dipungut melalui temubual separa berstruktur dengan tiga puluh dua orang responden. Responden dipilih melalui

sampel terpilih menggunakan teknik bola salji, dalam kalangan pakar dan pengamal kaunseling Islam dan Kristian yang tersohor di Pantai Barat Semenanjung Malaysia, sama ada yang berdaftar atau tidak berdaftar. Data dianalisa melalui dua prosedur utama iaitu 'perbandingan berterusan' dan 'analisa songsang'. Beberapa dapatan kajian telah diperolehi daripada kajian ini: pertama, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua kaunseling Islam dan Kristian mempunyai asas yang kuat dalam Kitab Suci kedua-dua agama; kedua, penemuan daripada kajian ini menolak pandangan bahawa definisi kaunseling Islam tidak jelas, sebaliknya mengesahkan bahawa kaunseling Islam dan Kristian di Malaysia didefinisi selari dengan definisi-definisi yang terdapat dalam karya-karya para sarjana dalam kedua-dua agama tersebut; ketiga, perkembangan kaunseling Kristian di Malaysia adalah lebih terkehadapan berbanding kaunseling Islam, tetapi kaunselor Islam di Malaysia adalah lebih cemerlang di peringkat antabangsa berbanding Kaunselor Kristian; keempat, kaunseling Islam dan kaunseling Kristian Malaysia kaunseling dianggap diiktiraf oleh masyarakat, tetapi tidak diiktiraf oleh kerajaan dan undang-undang Malaysia.

A COMPARISON ON THE RECOGNITION OF ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING IN MALAYSIA

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a research in the field of comparative religion studies, which compares Islam and Christianity, focuses on counselling as a comparative subject and the recognition issue as the domain of the research. This study is conducted due to several research problems, which are the imprecise definition of Islamic and Christian counselling, lack of contemporary report on Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia, the recognition issues on the practice of Islamic and Christian counselling, the ignorance of similarities and differences between Islamic and Christian counselling and the precariousness in the practice of Islamic counselling compared to Christian counselling. The objectives of the studies were to introduce and integrate views of the concept of counselling in the light of al-Quran and Bible, to analyse the counselling practices of Muslim and Christian counselling practitioners in Malaysia, to access and evaluate the views of Muslims and Christian counselling practitioners on the concept, the development and the recognition of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia and to compare the concept, development and recognition status of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia. A grounded theory qualitative research methodology was utilized in this study. Data was gathered from two main strategies, the library research and field research. The field research data was collected from semi structured interviews of thirty two respondents. Selective snowball sampling was carried out as they were

chosen among the experts and the prominent registered and non-registered practitioners of Islamic and Christian counselling in the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The data analysis process involved two main procedures, constant comparative and negative case analysis. The findings of this study were; first, this study demonstrates that both Islamic and Christian counselling has strong Scriptural foundations. Second, the findings rejected the view that Islamic counselling was not clearly defined, and confirmed that the Islamic and Christian counselling definition in Malaysia is parallel to the definition in the literatures of both religions. Third, Christian counselling development is more advance compared to Islamic counselling Malaysia but Muslim counsellors in Malaysia are more outstanding compared to the Malaysian Christian Counsellors when matched up to their colleges worldwide. Fourth, both Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia were considered recognized by the community, but not recognized by the Malaysian government and law.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

This thesis is a research in the field of comparative religious studies, which compares Islam and Christianity, focuses on counselling as a comparative subject and the recognition issue as the domain of the research. Previous comparative studies on Islam and Christianity have extensively dealt with most of the basic theological and ritual aspects (Hashemian, 1999, Minor, Ghobary, Dowson & Proctor, 2014 & Balkin, Watss & Ali, 2014). Therefore, the present comparative study of these two religions is directed towards contemporary subject matters, and one of the subjects is counselling.

Counselling has been considered a practical theology in the Christian tradition and has developed as a discipline in the Christian world since the 1960s (Kendagor, 2005: 39). Whereas in the Muslim sphere, counselling has emerged as a professional psychological approach for preaching (*da‘wah*) and offering advice (*naṣīḥah*) since the 1970s (Abu ‘Iyāt, 1988). Despite the late emergence of counselling as a distinct discipline in both religions, it has been declared that its origin is from the holy books and scriptures (Al-Muhāmid, et.al, 2006: 61 & Swindoll, 2009: 125).

Malaysia has recently seen attempts to insert religious values into counselling practices and the counsellors have been aware of the religious aspects in the philosophy, moral values and code of ethics of counselling (Abu Bakar, 2009: 4). Nevertheless, there

is no study on Malaysia's response generally and the counsellors' response specifically, towards religious counselling from aspects such as recognition, involvement or impact of religious counselling in Malaysia.

The recognition aspect is raised in this research because even though spiritual counselling has become increasingly recognized in some countries such as the United States (Weld & Eriksen, 2007: 126), secular counselling has been the prevailing counselling approach recognized by state laws (Seamone, 2011: 289). This law holds that strict ethical standards decree an individual's right to be free from religious influence; therefore, state licensed counsellors must not advocate their personal religious beliefs. For instance, in the USA, The National Christian Counsellors Association (NCCA) website reports, "the state recognizes that counselling is one of the responsibilities of the Church and its clergy". Nevertheless:

"Counsellors who have been licensed by the state are held to strict ethical standards that mandate an individual's right to be free from religious influence. The state licensed professional counsellor is forbidden to pray, read or refer to the Holy Scriptures, counsel against things such as homosexuality, abortion, etc. Initiating such counsel would be considered unethical by the state. In most states in the U.S., state licensed counsellors "must not promote their personal religious beliefs" according to the code of ethics in each respective state. The only time a state licensed counsellor can involve religious (Christian) principles, morals, activities, instruction, etc., is if the counselee initiates or requests counsel in this area".

In addition, Dr Bob Kelleman, Chair of the Biblical Counselling and Discipleship Department at Crossroads Bible College in Indianapolis, declared in his blog that during his consultation, he found that:

"It is easy for churches to cascade into polar extremes regarding biblical counselling and the law. One extreme causes churches to retreat in

paranoia because of the fear of lawsuits. In response, they decline to launch church counselling ministries and refer everyone to outside help. In the other extreme response, churches ignore legal issues and place at risk their church, their counselling ministry, and the people to whom they minister... Legally, Christian counselling falls under the general term spiritual or religious counselling and enters a realm that civil courts are neither prepared nor permitted to adjudicate”.

From these two statements, it is evident that there are some legal issues in the practice of Pastoral Counselling in the US concerning the promotion of faith or prayer in the counselling process. Initiating such counselling is considered unethical by the state. However, the state and federal governments in the US have jurisdictional boundaries and do not interfere with the authority of churches and its clergy when initiating Christian counselling (The Pastoral Counselling Centre, 2011). In other words, religious counselling is not the government’s affair but it is the religious bodies’ initiative.

That is an example of the state of religious counselling in a secular country. Hence, this study intends to investigate the same issue in Malaysia besides the study of scriptural and theological foundations of counselling in Islam and Christianity.

1.2 The Definition of Operational Terms

To begin with, it is beneficial to have a view of the definitions of the thesis topics. ‘Recognition’ is derived from the word ‘recognize’, which means “...to be aware of the significance of; to acknowledge the existence, validity, authority, or genuineness of, to accept as a fact, admit, accept, to acknowledge as worthy of appreciation or approval...”; (Webster’s New World Dictionary of American English, 1991: 1122). Thus ‘recognition’ means “recognizing or being recognized, acknowledgment,

admission, as of a fact, approval, gratitude...” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1994: 1122). Thus, the definition of the term ‘recognition’, in the thesis title, and what will be discussed later in this thesis carried its general meaning of acceptance, acknowledgement, appreciation, credit and so forth, and was not specifically defined as legal recognition *per se*.

Whereas ‘counselling’ or ‘counseling’ (with one ‘l’ in American spelling) refers to “a mutual exchange of ideas, opinions; or any advice; resulting from such an exchange...””(Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1994: 316) or “advice resulting from consultation” ...”(Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1994: 222), or “advice, especially formally given; or consultation, especially to seek or give advice...”(Thompson, 1995: 305). Therefore, the word ‘counseling’ insinuates “to give advice to; or to urge the acceptance; or recommend...”(Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1994: 316). Some dictionaries meticulously add the value of professionalism such as in this definition, which delineates counseling as “the process of assisting and guiding clients, especially by a trained person on a professional basis, to resolve especially personal, social or psychological problems and difficulties...” (Thompson, 1995: 305). Some add the psychological quintessence when defining counseling as “a professional guidance service for individuals, applying the techniques of psychological testing”(New Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language: 1991: 222).

Hence, the definition of the topics in this thesis demonstrate that this thesis is designed to study the significance, existence, validity, authority, genuineness,

appreciation, approval, acknowledgment, admission and the gratitude towards the action of giving advice, or urging the acceptance or recommendation that concerns or is characterized by adherence to religion or to be devout or godly, whether associated or not associated with professionalism or psychological quintessence in resolving personal, social or psychological problems and difficulties, or guiding the individual.

In addition, the word ‘counselling practices’ used in this thesis carries the literal meaning of practice as a “continuous exercise”, an “actual performance or application” and “the usual way of doing something” (Meriam-Webster Dictionary-practice, 2017). Thus, the practices of counselling in this thesis mean the usual performance or application of counselling exercised by a person, whether he is a counsellor or a pastor. It was not meant as the systematic process of counselling carried out by a professional counsellors. Additionally, “empirical” means “originating in or based on observation or experience” (Meriam-Webster Dictionary-empirical, 2017). Hence, empirical data stated in this thesis means set of data collected based on the real experience of the respondents and their observations, and also the observations by the researcher recorded in the research notes. Finally, “model” means “a set of ideas that describe the state of something” that could be “an example for imitation or emulation” (Meriam-Webster Dictionary-model, 2017). Thus “counseling model” discussed in this thesis means a set of ideas formulated by a scholar or counsellor describing counselling, whether on its philosophy or process, that could be exemplified, practiced and experimented by others.

1.3.Statement of the Problem

1.3.1. Imprecise definition of Islamic and Christian Counselling

There was an interesting remark in an article written by Mey, Othman, Salim and Che Din (2009: 229) which suggested a need for an extensive study on Islamic counselling. The authors said:

“Islamic counselling is a discipline that is vaguely defined and lacking a sound theoretical basis for developing models of intervention. Giving that Islamic counselling is not yet in a form where its actual implementation can be monitored, guidelines need to be developed and integrated into a theoretical framework”.

Although in Malaysia, Islamic counselling services are offered in most Islamic councils and departments and are also accessible at some *masjids* (*masjid* (*mosque*)s), Islamic centres in universities and Islamic Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Zakaria & Mat Akhir, 2016b), a few Malaysian counselling pioneers, members of counselling boards and conventional counselling practitioners have disputed the fact whether Islamic counselling really exists in Malaysia (Zakaria & Mat Akhir, 2016). Although counselling practitioners have declared that they were practicing Islamic counselling, it is argued whether their practices were genuinely “Islamic”. This is due to the theories and procedures applied during their counselling sessions that are not distinctly different from conventional counselling. In addition, some Muslim conventional counsellors have challenged the use of the term “Islamic counselling” because they do not agree that their practices are un-Islamic (Othman, 2012). However, most of the abovementioned arguments are not recorded in literature but rather lingers in counselling workshops or

conferences. The author herself has experienced similar arguments when presenting a paper on Islamic counselling during a conference in Oman in 2014.

It is presumed that one of the factors that caused the emergence of these arguments was the apparent definition of Islamic counselling and the vagueness of its identity. The worst remark faced by Islamic counselling practitioners is the renunciation of any Islamic constituent that is related to counselling (Mohd Nasir, 2009). There are also some Muslim scholars who disagree with the use of the “Islamic counselling” term to an Islamized module of counselling (Jafari, 1993). In Malaysia, most of the Islamic counselling definitions defined by Malaysian Muslim counsellors or scholars are still based on Western counselling terminology (Abu Bakar, 2009: 14). Abu Bakar (2009: 2) mentioned about the conflict between the two groups in Malaysia while defining Islamic counselling either as a pragmatic approach or as a “grand theory” according to the Qur’ānic approach.

On the contrary, while discussing Christian counselling, it is apparent that it has developed a distinct definition and identity, while diverging itself from secular counselling. Nevertheless, there is still confusion among Christians regarding Christian counselling models, especially between pastoral counselling and professional or clinical Christian counselling (Crawford, 2012). Despite the rigorous discussion to determine the definition of Christian counselling since the 1970s, there is no survey conducted in Malaysia to discover the Malaysian Christian counsellors’ perception on the meaning and essence of Christian counselling.

1.3.2. Lack of contemporary report on Islamic and Christian Counselling in Malaysia

Scholars stressed the need for more research in multicultural counselling to be conducted in Malaysia (Jaladin & Ping, 2013: 22, Raja Mohan & Sorooshian, 2012: 293). Nevertheless, there is no comprehensive report on Islamic and Christian counselling development in Malaysia. The researches or surveys in this area are very limited, thus the preceding argument concerning ‘definition’ could not be answered satisfactorily.

1.3.3. The recognition issues on the practice of Islamic and Christian Counselling

Several studies had highlighted the importance and significance of Islamic counselling practices in this modern world, such as the article written by Nik Rusila Nik Yaakob (2012). On the other hand there were also views that rejected that idea. For instance in Iran, Yadegarfar & Bahramabadian (2014) had rejected the view of incorporating Islamic law (*Shari’a*) in counselling that was related to ethical dilemmas such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). For Iranian psychologists and counsellors with LGBT clients and the related ethical dilemmas, it is said that:

“...instead of referring to the law and religious sources for guidance, they should instead refer to more appropriate sources such as developmental psychology, professional ethics codes, literature on the philosophy of psychology and existing researches and compilations of professional ethics”.

In discussing recognition issues in Christian counselling, the literatures had shown that there were pros and contras regarding this issue. On the negative side, there were reports that demonstrate the deceleration of religious counselling together with several

instances of influences of religion in counselling, even during the post-secular period. In terms of overall growth of pastoral counselling in Britain (2001), Foskett and Lynch (2001) reported that the status of pastoral counselling in the wider British counselling movement in the early 21st century was insignificant due to several factors. The factors referred to were the decline in British society's support for religious institutions and their preference to non-church-based counsellors, the fragmentation of pastoral counselling among different organizations due to the absence of a single leading organization, the deficiency of exclusive interpretation of particular psychological models of pastoral counselling and the nonexistence of sustained academic interest in British pastoral counselling. Richard E. Close (2010) discussed the boundary confusion and incursion of professional counsellors with clergy members. This article insisted on the necessity to clarify and distinguish the formal and functional roles of counsellors and clergy. The result of the research gave an impression that the clergy were not given a perceptible recognition to perform counselling tasks.

On the contrary and on a more positive side regarding the recognition issue, Bondi (2013) reported that counselling and psychotherapy in the post-Durkheim Scotland, were deeply instilled with Christian influences. Ting (2014) also reported that even in a socialist country like China, the need for pastoral psychology in both the urban and rural setting is growing. Furthermore, even in a Czech atheistic context, Raus (2014) reported that there are demands in Christian, value-based marital seminars and counselling from the secular community.

While facing this contradictory of views, and while Muslim or Christian counsellors could still practice what they declare as Islamic or Christian counselling in Malaysia without any predicament, there is vagueness lie in Counsellors Act 1998 (2006), which does not have a section mentioning the criteria for registering religious counsellors in Malaysia. The lack of interference in the practice might be due to lenient law enforcement or the absence of report associated, misconduct or maltreatment of religious counselling. In addition, there is no authoritative body responsible for accrediting the practice of Islamic or Christian counselling in Malaysia.

1.3.4. The ignorance of similarities and differences between Islamic and Christian counselling and the precariousness in the practice of Islamic counselling compared to Christian counselling.

There are very limited studies comparing Islamic and Christian counselling. One of them was a study by Kianoosh Hashemian (1999), an Iranian researcher in the Department of Psychology at Azzahra University Tehran had showed a prejudiced presentation or comparison in his article. He revealed that Christian psychotherapy's primary goal was reconciliation with God. The Christian psychotherapy technique was mentioned extensively, starting with the explanation about man's nature and the inherited sins, and then he proceeded to the theory of sanctification, and later discussed the practice of confession, reproof, instruction, and the virtues of good deeds that influence love. In reference to Islamic psychotherapy, the writer just presented factors that could be considered as primary and secondary prevention initiatives and a form of treatment, extracted from the al-Qur'ān. Nevertheless, a larger dimension of Islamic and

Christian counselling was not explored in the scriptures (i.e. the theological foundation, ethics, method, technique, etc.) and no recognition issue was raised in the study.

Smith (2015: 1) emphasized the importance of studies on Muslim-Christian relations in order “to understand the way in which members of the two communities experience each other in specific areas of the world today”. In addition, in studies regarding comparative religion, research concerning the comparison in the field of counselling is scant. As of now, written or published reports of such studies have not been discovered in Malaysia. The ignorance of the similarities and differences between Islamic and Christian counselling has not been countered. This contradicts Walter’s (2007: 67) suggestion that Malaysian Christians and Muslims “need to learn more about each other from each other and move forward towards nation-building and seeking a common destiny”. Without the distinguished knowledge on the theological foundation of counselling in both faiths, the clients would not be able to identify the difference between counselling theories or interventions in both religions applied by any counsellor. Eventually a Muslim client might be treated with Christian-based counselling that contradicts the Muslim faith, or vice versa. In addition, upon reviewing literatures about religious counselling, it is suspected that the practice of Islamic counselling is tremulous compared to Christian counselling. The ignorance of authoritative bodies that foresee Islamic affairs in Malaysia regarding this issue or the actual situation in contemporary Malaysia might result in the deficiency of Islamic advocacy movements (*da‘wah*).

The problems mentioned previously justify the reason for choosing this research topic and therefore, the quest to impart answers for those problems will be the aim of this study.

1.4 Research Objectives

In order to provide solutions for the preceding research problems, this study attempts to meet the following research objectives:

- a) to introduce and integrate views of the concept of counselling in the light of al-Quran and Bible;
- b) to analyse the counselling practices of Muslim and Christian counselling practitioners in Malaysia;
- c) to access and evaluate the views of Muslim and Christian counsellors on the concept, the development and the recognition of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia;
- d) to compare the concept, development and recognition status of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia.

1.5 Research Questions

To meet its objectives, this study intends to answer the following questions:

- a) What are the definitions, the history, the philosophy, the goals, the characteristic of counsellors, the theological foundation and the counselling models as prescribed in al-Quran, the Bible and the literatures pertaining to these two religions?

- b) What are the meanings of Islamic and Christian counselling defined by the Muslim and Christian counsellors in Malaysia? What are the histories, the educational institutions, the conferences and seminars, the associations, the centres and the counselling models of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia?
- c) What are the perceptions regarding the meaning of 'recognition'? What are the authoritative bodies responsible for accrediting Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia and licensing the counsellors? What is the status of recognition of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia? What are the restrictions faced by the Islamic and Christian counselling practitioners in Malaysia and what are their suggestions to overcome them?
- d) What are the similarities and differences between the concept, the definition, the development and the recognition status of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute towards the configuration of a comprehensible meaning of Islamic and Christian Counselling and will adduce to the Malaysian government and community the state of Islamic and Christian Counselling in contemporary Malaysia. Recommendations to the authoritative body and religious counsellors could be established based on the research results in order to improve the degree of recognition of religious counselling in Malaysia. Consequently, this study could contribute towards promoting religious counselling movements in Malaysia.

The results of the comparative study will benefit the stakeholder by sharing and exploiting the *modus operandi* of the recognizable counselling method, which would lead towards a thriving religious counselling sector in Malaysia. Furthermore, it will also intensify the awareness of each other's faith and condition in order to promote understanding and tolerance in a multi religious and ethnic society in Malaysia. The mutual problems or restrictions faced by both Islamic and Christian Counselling movements in Malaysia portrayed in this study would diminish the misunderstanding and scepticism among the converts of these two religions.

This study is also significant for the future growth of Islamic counselling in Malaysia, since a clear definition is vital in the primary stage of its development, especially in the designation of Islamic counselling manuals and training syllabus. The result of this study could be the foundation for establishing a consensus about the definition and understanding between the Malaysian Islamic and conventional counsellors, including members of the Malaysian Board of Counsellors. Whereas to the Christian community in Malaysia, this study will contribute by providing the latest information on the variety of Christian counselling practices in Peninsular Malaysia.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study had relied predominantly on the qualitative research methodology in order “to produce intensive, authentic descriptive accounts of experiences and actions” (McLeod, 2003: 30). Due to the absence of previous research, insufficient references,

and lack of predetermined theory for the research problems, a grounded theory qualitative methodology was utilized in this study. Grounded Theory is a research procedure to develop emerging conceptual categories, in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation, explain the ideas and actions of research participants, which ultimately will resolve the research concerns and produce a “theory” as the end end-product of this process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As in this this research, this methodology was applied to explain the ideas of respondents thus ultimately will produce four theories; the Malaysian definition on Islamic and Christian counselling, the current status of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia whether they were well developed or not, the meaning of recognition and finally the theory whether Islamic and Christian counselling is recognized or nor recognized in Malaysia. The objective is to explore avenues of opinions of the respondents and to allow the development of conclusions from a process of immersion in the data analysis processes. The inductive reasoning approach, which starts from specific observation and arrives at general conclusions (Walliman, 2011: 11), was applied in this research. No hypotheses whether Islamic and Christian counselling is recognized or not, can be found at the initial stages of this research. Beginning with research questions, lingering in the key issues whether Islamic and Christian counselling is recognized or not, the researcher then developed generalisations from the respondents’ views and make a deduction of general conclusions.

This grounded theory research involved a few processes, which were determining research questions, theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, memo-writing, data

analysing and theories-constructing (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The first process, determining research questions, was done by analysing the limited literatures that later, instigated a presumption on what should be investigated (on the definition, the current development, the meaning of recognition and the status of Islamic and Christian counselling whether they were recognized or not in Malaysia) in order to answer the research problems. As the research progressed, the researcher focussed the research question more narrowly and developed more open ended interview questions and later came to finalizing the core research questions (as mentioned in page 12).

The second process was collecting data. The data in this research was gathered from two main strategies, namely the library research and field research. They are as follows:

a. Library Research

The first phase of data collection was intended to meet the first objective of this thesis, which is to determine the definition, history, scriptural and theological foundation, and models of Islamic and Christian Counselling. The primary sources of information are the Islamic and Christian Holy Scriptures and the Malaysian Counsellors' Act and Ethics, while the secondary sources are the authoritative literatures, past academic researches and official websites of both faiths.

b. Field Research

The second phase of data collection complements the empirical part of the thesis and was projected to collect informants' views on the practice and recognition of

Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia. Empirical means that the data was collected from the real experience of respondents and could later be verified and tested. The field research was conducted to answer research questions (b), (c), and (d), which were to investigate the definitions of Islamic and Christian counselling according to Malaysian counsellors, to investigate the status of development of Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia, to clarify the models applied in Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia and to investigate the meaning of recognition and the degree of recognition towards Islamic and Christian counselling in Malaysia. Interviews, which are considered as the very widely used qualitative data-collection technique (Walliman, 2011: 74) were utilized in this stage. The field research involved the following procedures:

i. Theoretical Sampling

The qualitative research sample is flexible and a range of theoretical and practical considerations determines the choice of participants (Walliman, 2011: 72). The aim while determining the sample was not to “generalize findings to a broader population per se” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Thus, this strategy was taken account by the researcher while selecting the respondents for this research. Selective sampling was carried out as they were chosen among the experts and the prominent practitioners of Islamic and Christian counselling, comprising registered and non-registered Muslim and Christian counselling practitioners. They were chosen from two categories, namely religious counselling practitioners and conventional counsellors representing three major authorities in the counselling field in Malaysia. The major authorities are the Malaysian Board of Counsellors,

Malaysian Department of Islamic Development and Malaysian Counsellors Association. The Muslim and Christian conventional counsellors and the authorities were also included as participants in order to explore their debates and views regarding legal restrictions as well as its implications regarding the research topic in Malaysia.

The filter for “who were the experts” and “who were prominent” was determined by the recognition given among the respondents themselves. Hence, they were selected through snowball sampling, as the first respondent for Islamic counselling chosen was a university professor renowned for his activities promoting Islamic counselling and was also a member of the counsellor board. Then, he suggested other experts in this field to be the next respondents and so forth. As for Christian counselling, the first respondent was a prominent representative of a Malaysian Christian counsellors association that suggested the other experts and prominent Christian counsellors and pastors to be the respondents of this study. Some of these experts from both Islamic and Christian counselling were also traced from counselling websites and blogs that are promoting their expertise and activities. The snowball sampling was also chosen because it was discovered during the research that there were not many professional counsellors in Malaysia who dared to declare their practices as a form of religious counselling and they were not well known. In fact, before this research, the Muslim participants themselves did not acknowledge each other due

to the absence of an active Islamic counselling association that congregates them (after this research, the author had managed to assemble them in a conference).

This theoretical sampling process also involved initial data collection and analysis (Glaser, 1978). Therefore the data analysis was done after the interview of the first respondent was carried out, which in turn stimulate further data collection. Thus, in addition to reference by previous respondents, the decision on who would be chosen as the next respondent was also determined by the purpose of “explicating and refining the emerging theory” (Breckenridge, 2009: 113). In this research, the theoretical sampling proceeded as major categories emerged. For example, in the usage of the term “Islamic counselling”, three major categories of “not accepted”, “fully accepted” and “accepted but preferred to use other terms” emerged. Thus, the theoretical sampling proceeded as different respondents gave various justifications and factors that lead to their views. The same procedure of theoretical sampling applied throughout the investigation of all research questions.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) also stressed that “the more systematic the theoretical sampling, the more conditions and variations that will be discovered, therefore the greater the generalizability, precision, and predictive capacity of the theory”. Therefore, the selection of respondents was not restricted to just one area in Malaysia, but were chosen from counsellors representing eight states in the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, which are Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan and Johor. The limitation to West Coast

of Peninsular Malaysia population is because Christian counselling activities or services are dominant in this part of Malaysia. The limitation was also due to time and cost constraints. The Christian respondents were also limited to the Protestant movement because firstly this movement is more active in offering counselling services to the public compared to the Catholic Church; and secondly, most of the Christians in the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia are Protestants (Robert, et.al., 1992).

ii. Theoretical Saturation

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested that the sample size should depend on one that supports the saturation point. Saturation means “no new properties emerge and the same properties continually emerge” (Glaser, 1978, p. 53). Thus, in this research, initially, the number of sample were set to the minimum of sixteen, eight Muslim respondents and another eight Christian respondents, representing eight states in West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Nevertheless, as theoretical sampling involved collecting further data when new categories continued to emerge, the researcher kept on sampling and coding the data until the number of respondents had reached to thirty two. The number of Christian respondents was eleven, with just one of them representing Malaysian counselling authorities. Whereas there were twenty-one Muslim respondents, with four of them being members of Malaysian counselling authorities. The difference between the number of Muslim

and Christian respondents was due to the requirement for the data to meet its saturation point. The Muslim respondents provided various dimensions of views compared to the Christian respondents, who have come out with almost similar data and views. Six of the Christian respondents were pastors while the other five were professional Christian counsellors. One Muslim respondent was not a professionally trained counsellor while the others had received degrees in counselling, even though not every one of them possessed a license to practice issued by the Malaysian Counsellors Board. The detailed demographic information on the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Respondent's codes and profiles

Respondent's codes	Gender	Age (Range)	Counselling Qualification	Type of Practice	State
Muslim Counsellor 1	Female	50-60	Registered counsellor	University lecturer in Counselling	Kedah
Muslim Counsellor 2	Male	70-80	Registered counsellor	Private counsellor	Perak
Muslim Counsellor 3	Male	40-50	Registered counsellor	Counsellor in Governmental Department related to Islamic Affairs	
Muslim Counsellor 4	Female	40-50	Registered counsellor	Member of Malaysian Counsellor Board Associate Professor in Counselling	Selangor
Muslim Counsellor 5	Male	40-50	Registered counsellor	University lecturer in Counselling	Perak
Muslim Counsellor 6	Male	70-80	Registered counsellor	Professor in Counselling	Kedah
Muslim Counsellor 7	Male	50-60	Registered counsellor	Member of Malaysian Counsellor Board Associate Professor in Counselling Member of Malaysian	Perak

Counsellor Board					
				Committee member of Association of Malaysian Counsellors	
Muslim Counsellor 8	Male	60-70	Registered counsellor	Private practitioner	Perak
				Committee member of Association of Malaysian Counsellors	
Muslim Counsellor 9	Male	60-70	Registered counsellor	Private practitioner	Wilayah Persekutuan
Muslim Counsellor 10	Male	60-70	Non-registered counsellor	Counsellor in a <i>masjid (mosque)</i> counselling centre	Selangor
Muslim Counsellor 11	Male	50-60	Registered counsellor	School counsellor	Perlis
Muslim Counsellor 12	Female	40-50	Registered counsellor	University Lecturer in Counselling	Selangor
Muslim Counsellor 13	Female	40-50	Non-registered Counsellor	University Lecturer in Education	Selangor
Muslim Counsellor 14	Female	50-60	Registered counsellor	University Lecturer in Counselling	Wilayah Persekutuan
Muslim Counsellor 15	Female	40-50	Registered counsellor	Professor in Counselling	Johor
Muslim Counsellor 16	Male	50-60	Registered counsellor	Counsellor at Department of Islamic Affairs	Negeri Sembilan
Muslim Counsellor 17	Male	40-50	Registered counsellor	School counsellor	Kedah
Muslim Counsellor 18	Female	50-60	Non-registered counsellor	Counsellor at university Islamic centre	Penang
Muslim Counsellor 19	Female	50-60	Registered counsellor	University Lecturer in Counselling	Negeri Sembilan
Muslim Counsellor 20	Female	20-30	Registered counsellor	University Lecturer in Counselling	Malacca
Muslim Counsellor 21	Female	20-30	Registered counsellor	University Lecturer in Counselling	Perak
Christian	Female	20-30	Registered	Counsellor at Christian	Wilayah

Counsellor 22 Christian Counsellor 23	Male	40-50	counsellor Registered counsellor	Ministries A counsellor at a private Christian counselling centre A committee member of Malaysian National Association of Christian Counsellors,	Persekutuan Selangor
Christian Counsellor 24	Female	30-40	Registered counsellor	Counsellor at a private Christian counselling centre	Wilayah Persekutuan
Christian Counsellor 25	Female	20-30	Registered counsellor	Counsellor at a private Christian counselling centre Masters Student in Biblical Counselling	Wilayah Persekutuan
Christian Counsellor 26	Male	50-60	Registered counsellor	Registered counsellor, Member of Malaysian Counsellor Board	Wilayah Persekutuan
Christian Pastor 27	Female	30-40	Christian Pastoral Counsellor	Christian Pastoral Counsellor Masters Student in Biblical Counselling	Selangor
Christian Pastor 28	Male	60-70	Non- registered counsellor	Christian Pastoral Counsellor	Kedah
Christian Pastor 29	Male	30-40	Non- registered counsellor	Christian Pastoral Counsellor	Malacca
Christian Pastor 30	Male	40-50	Non- registered counsellor	Christian Pastoral Counsellor	Johor
Christian Pastor 31	Male	50-60	Non- registered counsellor	Christian Pastoral Counsellor	Penang
Christian Pastor 32	Male	60-70	Non- registered counsellor	Christian Pastoral Counsellor Reverend in a church	Negeri Sembilan & Perak

iii. Interview Questions

The extensive in-depth interview was conducted using two sets of questions, which were semi-structured questions and unstructured or open-ended interviews. The semi-structured questions were initiated based on a few prior assumptions regarding the topics to be covered, which later were utilized to construct a list of potential questions. A pilot interview was set up to validate the semi-structured

questions. The first interviewee was a professor in Islamic counselling, who was also a fellow of Malaysian Counsellors Association, and the second interviewee was a non-Muslim member of the Malaysian Counsellor Board. They were interviewed with the proposed semi-structured interview questions, and later validated that the questions were understandable, reliable and appropriate to answer the research questions and meet the objective of the study (The set of validated questions is found in Appendix A and the sample of interview questions validation form is attached in Appendix B). The data from this pilot interview were not included in this thesis and the interviewee were not counted as respondents. Nevertheless, during the theoretical sampling process, one of the initial questions were found irrelevant and thus had been omitted from the final list (Appendix A). These question is “how do you define religious counselling”. When asked this question, most of the respondents tended to define Islamic counselling or Christian counselling, which was redundant with the answer of the next question “how do you define Islamic/Christian counselling”.

On the other hand, the open-ended questions emerged as the respondents were required to explore the reasons or justifications for their views as the theory develops and to discuss broader topics or themes, which the interviewees would articulate free-flowingly. The interviews were conducted individually, face-to-face and was audio taped with the consent of the respondents.